

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS**

Re: Commission Reminds Broadcast Licensees, Cable Operators and Others of Requirements Applicable to Video News Releases and Seeks Comment on the Use of Video News Releases by Broadcast Licensees and Cable Operators

People in this country have a right to know where their news is coming from, but it's getting almost impossible to know. Everyone understands that a story cannot be judged without knowing its source, but increasingly the source goes unreported. Recently tens of thousands of citizens contacted the FCC demanding an investigation into the failure of broadcasters to disclose their use of government-generated "news" stories. They were right to do so. This Commission should investigate each such case. And it should strenuously enforce the rules against inadequate sponsorship identification.

In this era of huge corporate media, it has gotten just about impossible to tell the difference between news and entertainment or to differentiate between legitimate information and propaganda. Knowing the source of a story can help viewers and listeners judge its substance. Today's Public Notice underscores the importance of the issue and seeks more information on how some broadcasters and cable operators may be avoiding their responsibilities. I am pleased the Commission emphasizes in this Notice that while it collects more information, it will continue to enforce its rules.

These recent allegations, as well as other reports of payments involving local news shows, commentators and airtime for recording artists, highlight the need for stepped-up focus on these obligations. As an initial step, the Commission needs to complete its localism proceeding to determine to what extent broadcasters are serving the public interest.